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Home
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Service



A ROUND ROBIN CIRCUIT LINKING FARM & HOME BROADCASTERS

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IN THIS ISSUE ----

Louisiana extension folks say they've been 10 years behind the times in their use of radio. Bentley Mackay, extension editor, tells how they're sprinting to catch up, with special mention given to a potent farm program on WFL, New Orleans.

G. E. Markham of WGY, Schenectady, New York, recently prepared a paper on the use of drama in informational programs. With his permission, we're reproducing his thoughts. They're worth reading. (If you like this article, we have another he wrote on interviews.)

How a new short-wave transmitter has added to the interest value of the University of Illinois' farm programs is recounted by Ted Mangner.

Shorter articles report on a wide variety of radio activities in many States: the newly formed Rocky Mountain Radio Council; New Jersey's ninth year of broadcasting its Garden Club; New Mexico's series of 4-H Club broadcasts; an ambitious undertaking by rural women of Dodge County, Nebraska; a special news service for Vermont radio stations; and so on and on.

Yours truly,

John C. Baker
John C. Baker,
Radio Extension Specialist.

THEY LISTEN AT THE CREEK FORKS

By Bentley B. Mackay,
Extension Editor,
Louisiana State University.

Director J. W. Bateman took time off a few months ago to go deer hunting. He was alone in his car and had long since left the paved roads behind and the gravelled surfaces were becoming more sparse. He was in back-woods country. There was a heavy fog at seven o'clock that morning and the Director stopped at a small farm house to inquire the way to the hunting camp. From now on let's hear from the Director:



"I knocked on the flimsy door and was invited inside to get warm. There were four men seated around a battery-type radio and they weren't listening to a hill-billy program either. They were tuned in on 'Dixie's Early Edition' and I heard one of our specialists carrying on a spirited discussion with Woodrow Hattic, the director of WFL's farm program, on the 1940 outlook for farm crops and livestock. Frankly, this surprised me. My interest in radio had been luke-warm because I had always felt that we didn't reach the 'folks at the forks of the creek.' I found my last argument against the radio completely disproved.

"In conversation with the owner of the radio and his neighbors who had come over to hear the daily broadcast, I found it was from this battered radio set that these men kept up with the AAA programs, Soil Conservation work, cotton markets, etc. I was told also that sometimes as many as ten persons listened to the Friday noon broadcast put on by one of our county agents. None of these persons subscribed to a daily paper and I doubt seriously if there were three subscribers to a weekly in the entire community.

"After that experience, John Baker and Mackay had me at their mercy. We are about ten years late with radio work, but we are catching up."

Director Bateman is right. We are, or have been, ten years behind the rest of the Agricultural Extension Services in our work with radio. It is true that we have used Farm Flashes and have prepared occasional radio scripts, but we have never had the radio facilities that we have today.

When Station WWL, New Orleans, was stepped up to 50,000 watts some of us saw an opportunity of reaching not only Louisiana farmers but farmers of other States as well. We held conferences with the information representatives in the Department of Agriculture and found that their ideas coincided with ours. During the 40th annual convention of Southern Agricultural Workers at New Orleans last February we met with the manager of WWL and asked if he were interested in a coordinated farm program. He stated most emphatically that if those of us present--extension editors, information men from SCS, AAA, Farm Credit, Agricultural Markets, and Farm Security--could outline a program that would interest farm men and women he would guarantee the time and WWL would secure the best announcer of farm news available. But he ended up by saying that he doubted if we could do it.

"We want a pattern," he kept saying, "something like the Farm and Home Hour. If we can get that--you can have the time."

It was not until June 1939 that the station hired a man, Woodrow Hattic, a Louisiana farm-reared boy, to handle an agricultural program. A contest was announced with a small prize offered for a suitable name. Twenty-five thousand names were submitted. The name chosen was 'Dixie's Early Edition'--time 6:30 to 7:30 a.m., six days a week.

The program is informal. It begins with a few bars of Dixie; then a "Thought for the Day" by a minister. Then come the market reports of all southern markets; farm news items including announcement of important meetings in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama and other southern States; speakers (one farmer at least is included) representing the following agencies take part:

- Soil Conservation Service--twice monthly,
- Farm Security Administration--twice monthly,
- Farm Credit Administration--twice monthly,
- Agricultural Adjustment Administration--twice monthly,
- 4-H Club work--twice monthly,
- Future Farmers--twice monthly,
- Louisiana Agricultural Extension Service--four times monthly,
- Agricultural Marketing Service--four times monthly.

Since the inauguration of Dixie's Early Edition there have been requests from 33,000 persons asking for bulletins, circulars, and specific information. These requests came mostly from Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, Florida, Arkansas, Texas, but 31 States are covered in these requests.

In order to have an accurate check on requests for information, all persons are asked to write to WWL and not to the college. At the station the requests are sorted out according to States and forwarded to the Extension Editors. USDA requests are forwarded to the Louisiana editor, names listed by States and sent to Washington. Each State editor is given a list of the names and addresses of those who asked for Department bulletins. Our Louisiana requests are tabulated by parishes (counties) and forwarded to the county or home agents for their information. Beginning this spring we expect to make a weekly farm broadcast directly from farms.

Since the beginning of our coordinated broadcasts we have inaugurated a twice-a-week broadcast (15 minutes preceding Farm and Home Hour) over WJBO, Baton Rouge; once a week, KVOL, Lafayette, and KALB, Alexandria. These two programs are handled by the county and home agents.

In most instances we have thrown the script away and programs are handled in the form of discussions. In order to prevent rambling, questions are written, but the specialists or farmer is asked to answer in his own words. This has proved to be unusually successful. It often means the difference between a program with sparkle and just another farm broadcast.

RADIO SCHOOL

Two hours each week, State extension staff members attend a radio school. Ralph Steetle, the college radio instructor, has worked out a practical course and the staff members are given opportunity to work under actual studio conditions. "Students" prepare a script, present it from another studio, while the others make note of errors. Voice, technique, and subject matter all come in for their share of discussion. A "voice mirror", a device which records and plays back the voice, helps the student to correct defects in his own speech. The course will consist of ten lessons, unless the staff members ask for additional help.

The Census Bureau has announced that the 1940 Housing Census will include one question on radio: "Does this household have a radio receiving set." Radio industry had wanted more questions to provide more detailed information, but Census officials pointed out they were able to include only a small percentage of the questions suggested.

NEW MEXICO 4-H MEMBERS
DRAMATIZE PROJECT WORK

G. R. Hatch, 4-H Club specialist in New Mexico, started a series of weekly 4-H "project interviews" with 4-H Club members from different parts of the State. The programs are dramatized, usually with the scene laid at the member's home, discussing his or her practices. Frequently parents of the Club members are brought into the discussion, along with college specialists and county extension workers. Hatch reports "although it takes a little more time to prepare and a little more effort to present effectively, we feel that it should be of much more interest to the listening audience and should give a much better picture of what is being done than the type of program that has been used in the past."

The program is recorded, usually at the State College, and broadcast each Saturday noon over KOB, Albuquerque.

GARDEN CLUB COMPLETES
EIGHTH YEAR ON RADIO

Flowers would have been an appropriate birthday remembrance for the Radio Garden Club, which celebrated its eighth anniversary on January 6 of this year. The Radio Garden Club is presented by the New Jersey Extension Service, in cooperation with the Brooklyn Botanic Garden, the Garden Club of New Jersey, the Federation of Garden Clubs of Bergen County, New Jersey, and the Federated Garden Clubs of New York State. Marjorie Merritt and Wallace Moreland, extension editors, supervise the twice-weekly series of programs on the Mutual Network. The speakers come from the extension service and from the cooperating organizations.

Miss Merritt reports that during January 1100 requests for information were received from 34 States, the widest distribution of mail ever received during one month. New York, New Jersey, and California led in number of letters sent in.

THE HOOK UP WOULD BE IMPROVED BY AN ARTICLE FROM YOU.
ADDRESS: RADIO SERVICE, U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE.

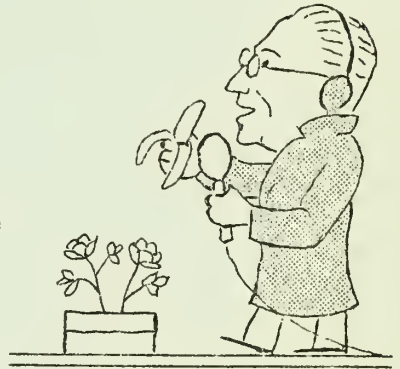
ROSES AND BANANAS AT 10 BELOW

(Lifted from a recent letter from Ted Mangner, Assistant in Radio Extension, University of Illinois.)

We just came back from a remote broadcast direct from the floriculture greenhouses here on the campus with seven roses and two bananas--the latter picked from their indoor jungle. Nice to have a remote like this when it's ten below on the outside.

These remotes are a once-a-week feature of the Illinois Farm Hour, the radio program presented each week-day from 12:30 to 1:00 over Station WILL by the University of Illinois College of Agriculture. Incidentally, we'll soon be 1,000 programs old.

Our short wave transmitter WAUI makes it possible for us to visit any spot within a radius of twenty-five miles of the campus. It all started when we began to wonder how we could get an acre of America's oldest soil experiment field--the Morrow Plots--in to the studio without tracking up the floor. Finally, we reversed the situation and strung up some wires so we could broadcast direct from the plots. That touched off the spark which eventually brought WILL's baby brother WAUI to our assistance.



A visit to the Morrow Plots is now an annual affair. Likewise we pay our annual respects to the greatest Brown Swiss cow in the world, Illini Nellie. Folks seemed to like it so well that during the second visit about 600 of them sent in a name for her new-born calf.

One day each week finds extension specialists at the University of Illinois College of Agriculture using WAUI. It may be under the ground (in the soil bins) talking about the effects of surface run-off. It may be in the University creamery talking about good dairy products; in the basement of some home proving that sewing machines really are contrary and not worn out; or we may be seated in the parlor of a farm home showing what a 4-H family can accomplish. We even gave one program "on the run" as we drove around the south farm in two automobiles talking about rotations. We always try to be

at the "scene of the crime"--shall we say--at least once a week to foster better farming and homemaking practices emphasized through the work being carried on by the University of Illinois Extension Service in Agriculture and Home Economics in cooperation with the United States Department of Agriculture.

Our syndicate service has grown to include some smaller stations outside the State. Our chief interest right now is outlining plans for developing a better type of syndicate service to our farm advisers who are presenting their own local radio programs. We're planning on a "swing" around the State to become better acquainted as soon as this frost gets out of the ground.

We just made a transcription on "The Story of the Use of Limestone" which we're going to send out to local stations to further our land use planning program here in Illinois. We hope to develop transcriptions to a point where they can be of a real service to our county extension workers.

VERMONT STATIONS GET FARM NEWS SERVICE

A special weekly agricultural news service for Vermont radio stations has been started by the New England Radio News Service. It is called "News of Vermont Agriculture" and is syndicated to all the stations in the State. N.E.R.N.S. is supported jointly by Federal and State agencies in New England, with headquarters in Boston. Charles Eshbach is director, with Philip Fleming as assistant.

The new Vermont series is in addition to two daily personal appearance broadcasts of information and market news, one early each morning on WBZ-WBZA; the other on the Colonial Network each noon; and a daily syndicated manuscript service, "News of New England Agriculture" mailed to 13 stations over New England. As a side line, the two-man staff provides a special weekly news summary to WTIC, Hartford.

Networks of the United States sold \$83,113,901 worth of time to commercial sponsors in 1939, a new high record. The 1939 total was \$71,728,400.

TWO FOR ONE IN ALABAMA

Since February 1, Alabama listeners to either station WAPI, Birmingham, or WCOV, Montgomery, have had the benefit of agricultural programs from both stations. WAPI has broadcast a daily farm program, the Auburn Farm and Family Forum, under the direction of Harwood Hull, assistant extension agricultural editor, for over two years. With two-way telephone lines between the stations, WCOV now carries the WAPI program, supplementing it with daily weather forecasts and livestock market reports from Montgomery, Alabama's capital city.

REVERSIBLE WALLS FOR NEW STUDIO

One of the new studios of the Columbia Broadcasting System in New York is reported to be the most versatile studio ever designed. The walls are built in narrow panels which have one hard side and one soft side. By adjusting the panels different accoustical effects can be produced, adapting the studio to the type of program being presented. Following recent trends in studio design, no two walls in the studio are parallel, and the ceiling is zig-zagged.

FOOD MANUFACTURERS FEED RADIO NETWORKS

Food and food beverage manufacturers paid more for network radio time in 1939 than any other group of sponsors. The total bill was nearly 25 million dollars. Next were the makers of drugs and toilet goods, spending over 22 million dollars. The tobacco industry bought 11 million dollars' worth, and makers of soap and household supplies, 9 million dollars' worth of network time.

Total volume of radio business for the year was estimated at something over 171 million dollars.

THE PLAY'S THE THING--SOMETIMES

By G. E. Markham, In Charge,
Agricultural Broadcasting,
General Electric Company,
Schenectady, New York.

Dr. Gleason L. Archer, in a 500-page history of broadcasting, has written:

"There is much competition on the air. Learned or 'highbrow' instruction as such cannot attract and hold a considerable audience. The educational lecturer, if he would be successful before the microphone, must therefore present his message in so attractive a guise that his listeners will keep tuned in because of the human interest quality of the broadcast. This means that in preparing the material to be presented the radio teacher must bear in mind that entertainment value is of primary importance, since that is the vehicle by which he may convey the message intended. An interesting story, anecdote, or biographical item may each have a rider attached -- the message or truth intended to be taught. This is the painless method of teaching by radio."



Not a word about radio sketches or plays in that quotation; yet drama is the perfect answer to the Archer hypothesis -- sometimes. Why only sometimes? Because the radio play -- unlike the radio talk or interview -- is, on the face of it, a fictitious situation and, as such, is effective or ineffective depending upon the skill of the writer and the competence of the performers.

The word "play" is, in the average mind, synonymous with entertainment. If its primary purpose is anything other than entertainment, it is an imposture on the audience. This is not to say that education may not be a by-product of a radio sketch; in fact, education may be the hidden purpose -- the justification of using dramatic technique. The obvious purpose, however, must be entertainment.

Educators, by and large, look upon the imparting of knowledge as such a serious business, and work at it so diligently, we need not concern ourselves with the introduction of educational material in the radio sketch. It will take care of itself. What is needed is a better understanding of entertainment values so that the most important element in this particular vehicle for conveying ideas and impressions will receive due attention.

Regardless of time and place of presentation, a play requires a plot. "Plot", according to Webster, is "The plan of a literary composition." It may or may not involve action. It may be simple or complicated. It suggests a "condition", explained at the beginning and changed at the end by the circumstances introduced in the play. In short, a plot is simply coordination of thought and action, its purpose being to take an audience step by step from one point or point of view to another. It is entertaining because people are involved, and people are always interested in other people.

Having evolved a plot, what weapon may the playwright use? Simply stated, his imperative need is human interest material, humor, pathos, anecdote, illustrative examples, argumentation, sparkling repartee -- in short, bright and natural conversation are essential and the more colloquial the language the better. Dull lines kill the play. Long involved speeches ruin a sketch. A rapid shift of voice and personality is of paramount consequence. Write as people talk.

Much might be said of suspense, intrigue, emotional drama and the like, but these are rather the properties of a stage play, not a 10-minute radio sketch. With so limited a period available, simple situations seem imperative, and plays involving ideas rather than action more nearly fit the bill. In general, it will be found best to rely on humor, anecdote and clever conversational sorties rather than soul stirring or philosophical verbiage. Besides, the "deeper" the sketch, the more effective a presentation it requires.

To be too specific about radio sketch writing is to discourage initiative and ingenuity and, perhaps, unknowingly to limit variety of result. Let us drop this phase of the radio play with the statement that there is more to it than simply writing lines for people to speak; the sketch must have point and purpose, definitely cover a given amount of time, action and thought, and engagingly carry the audience with it. Positively, a sketch is infinitely more difficult to prepare skillfully than is a radio talk.

No less important than preparation is the presentation. It is here that well-prepared playlets are murdered by incompetence and ineffectual delivery. It is occasionally true, also, that poorly prepared material is salvaged by exceptionally clever delivery.

Too much thought cannot be given to casting the radio play. The air is full of dramatic situations and broadcast sketches are either intentionally or unintentionally, compared with other radio plays. Unless fictitious episodes are handled naturally and realistically, no form of broadcasting can fall quite so flat.

Since, presumably, no great characterizations are involved, the choice of players should be based almost entirely on voice, personality and self possession. Choose by type unless selecting from individuals having dramatic experience. You cannot make a personality, unblest by native versatility, over into something special for a 10-minute playlet.

Unfortunately, personality, voice and self-possession are not always synonymous with achievement. The individuals you might like to use -- perhaps to give them recognition -- are frequently the ones who can do your play, or the cause it espouses, the most damage. In the case of untrained youth groups, there is only one sensible approach -- competitive auditions to get the best available talent. Both here, and in subsequent rehearsing, a dramatics teacher can give valuable assistance.

Furthermore, when choosing talent bear always in mind that the individuals chosen will be heard, not seen. The voice, not face or appearance, is what matters. Unconfirmed reports tell how the Advertising Manager of the Texaco Oil Company went to the theater for a week, sitting with his back to the stage, trying to determine whether Ed Wynn was funny enough without being seen to carry a great and expensive network program. Shut your eyes when choosing talent and ask yourself these questions about the voice you hear: Is it clear? Pleasant? Expressive? Does it sound the part? Above all, is it assured and confident? As between good voice and assurance always lean toward the individual who acts at ease and natural. Uncertainty in a radio speaker always transmits itself to the radio audience.

Do not be concerned about studio techniques. Given a clever sketch and good performers, it is the fault of the program director if the presentation is not effective. Last minute details are most conveniently handled in the studio before the broadcast. Before coming to the studio, however, you can rehearse lines, again and again, for niceties of inflection, pace and all the other things which make for competent expression.

Some of these observations may not be easy to take or to follow. Remember that the radio station has obligations, both to the public and to its clientele. It cannot foist drivel on the one; it cannot wipe out, during educational periods, the audience which would

normally be on hand to hear the entertainment provided by the other. When you undertake a broadcast, you assume the station's obligations for the period you are on the air. If you intend to wink at your responsibilities, play fair by refusing the radio opportunity.

Finally, nothing surpasses the dramatic form for entertaining and educating if it is skillfully handled. Nothing is quite so ghastly when it flops. Unquestionably, the play's the thing -- sometimes.

MORNING, NOON,
AND NIGHT

Usually in radio when a program has been presented once, that's enough. But when the cotton marketing quotas came up for consideration in December 1939, Station KELD, El Dorado, Arkansas, used a transcribed broadcast three times in one day. The transcription, discussing the cotton situation and urging farmers to vote in the referendum, was presented at 7:45 in the morning, 12:45 at noon, and 6:30 in the evening. County Agent G. I. Gilmore arranged for the broadcasts. He reports that a larger number of farmers voted in the referendum than had done so a year before.

NEBRASKA FARM WOMEN
START DAILY PROGRAM

Farm women in the 40 home demonstration clubs of Dodge County, Nebraska, are starting a series of daily 15 minute radio programs on Station KORN, Fremont. Each club will take the responsibility for a broadcast until the round has been made, and then it starts all over again.

Miss Helen Suchy, county home demonstration agent, is actively in charge of the program, with Extension Editor George Round in the coach's seat. First broadcast was presented February 19, 1940. Time of day, 4:15 p.m., Monday through Friday.

CALIFORNIA "EXPLORER" GIVES 500TH PROGRAM

Hale Sparks, radio director of the University of California, on January 5, presented his 500th program as "The University Explorer." The first "Explorer" program was presented in March 1933. In his role as Explorer, Sparks delves into research, teaching, and extension activities of the University system in California, and reports it to a West Coast audience twice a week.


AFTER YOU, MY DEAR GASTON

Station KFRU, Columbia, Missouri, cut down its power one evening in January, so its fellow station, WGBF, Evansville, Indiana, might be sure of reaching a special audience. The two stations operate on the same frequency and with the same power. WGBF made plans to broadcast a banquet of farmers and business men at Vincennes, Indiana, which is about midway between the two stations. If both stations operated at full 500 watts power, listeners in and around Vincennes would get interference on the 630 kc frequency. So, KFRU applied to the Federal Communications Commission and received permission to reduce its power for a short time that evening, so listeners to WGBF near Vincennes could hear their own program clearly.

HOME TALENT

One radio station could get a pretty fair broadcast from its board of directors. It is KMPC, Los Angeles, which recently introduced five stars of radio and movies as new members of its board of directors. The new directors are Bing Crosby, Paul Whiteman, Harold Lloyd, and Freeman Gosden and Charles Correll (Amos 'n Andy.)

The United States has about 65,000 licensed radio stations; 54,000 are amateur stations, and about 800 are regular broadcast stations.



DREAM COMES TRUE IN ROCKIES

A radio dream came true early in 1940, when radio stations in Colorado and Wyoming began to carry transcribed programs of the Rocky Mountain Radio Council. The dream was the property of Dr. A. G. Crane, president of the University of Wyoming, who is also president of the Radio Council.

For many years, President Crane had worked to marshal the educational agencies of the two States into a cooperative enterprise for the production of educational broadcasts. Organization plans were completed in 1939, and the first programs were made available to radio stations in 1940.

Twenty-nine universities, colleges, and educational organizations are members of the Radio Council. Each has a radio department or committee which plans, writes, and produces radio programs via electrical transcription. The Council has a central staff, headed by Robert B. Hudson, with headquarters in Denver, which assembles the transcribed programs, makes arrangements for time, and distributes the transcriptions to the radio stations.

Two Land Grant Colleges, the University of Wyoming and Colorado State College, are included in the Council.

Music, history, news, fairy tales, agriculture, literature, drama, and family relationships are among the general topics dealt with in the programs already made available to stations in Colorado and Wyoming.

Station WKAR, Michigan State College broadcasting station at East Lansing, is soon to boost its power from one thousand to five thousand watts. A new antenna for increased efficiency is expected to give still wider coverage to the station's signal.
